

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

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R 200837Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2276G

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PINS MY

SUBJ: TRANSITION: THE HARUN CASE (CONTINUED)

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 0281 (DTG 150520Z JAN 76)

KUALA LUMPUR 0293 (DTG 170426Z JAN 76)

1. SUMMARY: CORRUPTION CHARGES AGAINST AMBITIOUS
UMNO MAVERICK DATUK HARUN IDRIS AMENDED AND CASE
MOVED TO HIGH COURT. SUBSEQUENT PLOY BY HARUN TO
RESUME DUTIES AS CHIEF MINISTER OF SELANGOR STATE
FOILED. NEW PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN, KNOWN FOR
ABHORRENCE OF CORRUPTION AND UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE
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OF DESTABILIZING THREAT POSED BY HARUN

LIKELY PRESS FOR SPEEDY CONCLUSION OF COURT PROCEEDINGS AGAINST LATTER. END SUMMARY.

2. SOMEWHAT BURIED IN DEVELOPMENTS RELATING TO LATE PRIME MINISTER RAZAK'S ILLNESS AND DEATH WAS APPEARANCE BY SELANGOR CHIEF MINISTER/UMNO YOUTH LEADER DATUK HARUN IDRIS BEFORE SPECIAL SESSIONS COURT IN KUALA LUMPUR JAN 12. AT THAT TIME ALL 16 CHARGES OF CORRUPTION AND OTHER ABUSES OF OFFICE WERE AMENDED SO THAT HARUN NOW FACES 17 PRINCIPAL AND 15 ALTERNATIVE CHARGES. PROSECUTION TOOK ADVANTAGE (OVER STRENUOUS OBJECTIONS OF DEFENSE COUNSEL) OF LAST MINUTE CHANGES IN CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE TO HAVE CASE TRANSFERRED TO HIGH COURT, WHERE IT WILL BE MENTIONED FEB 9. AMENDED CHARGES CLEARLY AIMED AT BOLSTERING PROSECUTION CHANCES OF CONVICTING THE WILEY HARUN ON AT LEAST SOME OF THE CHARGES; CHANGE OF VENUE TO HIGH COURT, AS WE UNDERSTAND IMPLICATIONS, AIMED AT SPEEDING UP PROCEEDINGS BY REMOVING ONE LEVEL OF APPELATE JURISDICTION.

3. INTERESTING SIDESHOW INVOLVING HARUN TOOK PLACE IN CONJUNCTION WITH RAZAK FUNERAL OBSERVANCES. ON JAN 14, HARUN ANNOUNCED HE HAD RETURNED FROM LEAVE AND HAD RESUMED FULL RESPONSIBILITIES AS CHIEF MINISTER OF SELANGOR STATE, OSTENSIBLY WITH TELEPHONED CONCURRENCE OF SULTAN OF SELANGOR WHO CURRENTLY VISITING LONDON. AFFAIR BECAME MUDDLED WHEN HORMAT RAFIE, ACTING CHIEF MINISTER, INFORMED PRESS ON OR ABOUT JAN 16 THAT HE (RAFIE) HAD IN HAND A TELEGRAM FROM THE SULTAN IN LONDON ADVISING HIM TO CONTINUE TO CARRY ON AS "ACTING" CHIEF MINISTER. JAN 17 "NEW STRAITS TIMES" (NST) FRONTPAGED "CLARIFICATION" BY HARUN OF HIS INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HE WAS RETURNING FROM LEAVE. ACCORDING TO HARUN, WHAT HE MEANT WAS THAT HE HAD REQUESTED TO RETURN FROM LEAVE ONLY FOR THE DURATION OF THE STATE FUNERAL (FOR RAZAK) TO ENABLE HIM TO REPRESENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SELANGOR, ADDING THAT "NOW THAT THE STATE FUNERAL IS OVER I AM GOING ON LEAVE AGAIN."

4. COMMENT: DATUK HUSSEIN IS CONSIDERED A "STRAIGHT ARROW" BY LOCAL STANDARDS, GENERALLY OPPOSED TO CORRUPTION, AND SPECIFICALLY IS BELIEVED TO HAVE PUSHED FOR THE PROSECUTION OF HARUN SINCE THE SO-CALLED "BANGI AFFAIR" (IN

WHICH STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS IN JAN-FEB 1974
ACCUSED HARUN OF IRREGULARITIES INVOLVING TIMBER
EXTRACTION RIGHTS AT 3,000 ACRE SITE FOR NEW
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN BRANCH AT BANGI, SELANGOR --
SEE EMBASSY REPORTING FOR THAT PERIOD FOR
ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND). THUS IT IS UNLIKELY THAT
HE WILL ORDER THE PROSECUTION TO WITHDRAW ITS
CHARGES (AS APPARENTLY HE COULD DO). FURTHERMORE,
HARUN POSES A THREAT TO THE STABILITY AND ORDERLY
DEVELOPMENT OF THE SUCCESSION PROCESS WITHIN UMNO
AND IT WOULD SEEM IN DATUK HUSSEIN'S INTERET
TO NEUTRALIZE HIM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. (THERE ARE
RUMORS THAT DURING AN UMNO YOUTH GATHERING WHICH
TOOK PLACE JAN 15 AFTER TUN RAZAK'S DEATH WAS
ANNOUNCED A PETITION WAS FORWARDED TO THE UMNO
SUPREME COUNCIL URGING THAT HARUN BE MADE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER.) MOST OBSERVERS HERE
BELIEVE THAT CONVICTION ON ANY ONE OF THE 17
COUNTS AGAINST HARUN WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO
PUT HIM OUT OF BUSINESS AS IT WOULD DEPRIVE HIM
OF THE RIGHT TO HOLD POLITICAL OR GOVERNMENTAL
OFFICE. THE NEW PRIME MINISTER, THEREFORE,
PROBABLY WILL DO ALL IN HIS POWER TO SPEED UP
THE TRIAL IF OUR ANALYSIS IS CORRECT. FINALLY,
THE ATTEMPTED END RUN BY HARUN TO RESUME HIS
CHIEF MINISTERSHIP SEEMS IN RETROSPECT TO BE A
DESPERATE MOVE INSPIRED BY HIS OWN FEELING, AS
REPORTEDLY ADMITTED TO PRESSMEN IN LATE DECEMBER,
THAT IF HE IS NOT PERMITTED TO RESUME OFFICE SOON
HE WILL BEGIN TO LOSE HIS FOLLOWING AND COULD FIND
HIMSELF POWERLESS EVEN BEFORE A VERDICT IS
RENDERED. THE SPEED WITH WHICH HIS PLOY WAS
FRUSTRATED BY THE SULTAN OF SELANGOR SEEMS TO
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REFLECT THE GOM'S DETERMINATION TO KEEP HIM IN HIS
PRESENT WEAKENED STATE EVEN THOUGH THEY CANNOT
OR ARE NOT WILLING TO INHIBIT HIS EFFORTS TO
KEEP SUPPORT ALIVE THROUGH VISITS TO LOCAL UMNO
YOUTH BRANCHES.
DILLON

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